



The Reeves Collection

Washington And Lee University

By Rick Russack

LEXINGTON, VA. — Many folks are aware that the Reeves Center at Washington and Lee University houses an outstanding collection of Chinese export porcelain, documented in a 2003 book by Thomas V. Litzenburg Jr and Ann T. Bailey, as well as in a 1973 exhibition catalog. Less well known is the fact that the collections include Japanese, European and American wares made between 1500 and 1900, and accomplished paintings by collector Louise Herreshoff Reeves.

Mary Todd Lincoln ordered a 666-piece dinner, dessert and breakfast service in 1861. She was widely criticized for spending more than \$3,000 when the country was at war. Two of 24 egg cups from the service are on view in the Reeves Center.

Page Above: The Reeves Center was founded in 1967 to accommodate the gift of alumnus Euchlin Reeves and his wife Louise. It displays her paintings and the couple's collections of Asian, European and American ceramics.





Louise and Euchlin Reeves, her second husband, lived in Providence, R.I. Both collected, though accumulated is perhaps the better term. In addition to ceramics, they acquired early American furniture. They bought from some of the leading dealers of the day: among them, Elinor Gordon, Philip Suval, Israel Sack, Inc, Ginsberg and Levy, and David Stockwell. After filling one house with their collections, mostly ceramics, they bought a house next door and proceeded to fill that one as well. Prompted in part by the fact that Euchlin Reeves was a 1927 graduate of its school of law, the Reeveses gave their collection to Washington and Lee in 1967, shipping more than 200 barrels of ceramics from Providence to Lexington.

Unknown to many, Louise Reeves was an accomplished artist. “Girl in a Garden,” 1899, is one of about 20 of her paintings on display in the Reeves Center.

The collection has grown over the years by donation and purchase, from 1,800 pieces to about 3,000. In the area of Chinese export porcelain, it has few peers. It is particularly strong in armorial wares and pieces with connections to America. Eight pieces decorated with the arms of the Society of the Cincinnati are from a large service that once belonged to George Washington. The Washington dinner service is one of the most significant sets of Chinese export porcelain made for the American market.

William Edward West's painting "Robert E. Lee in Dress Uniform of a Lt of Engineers" was completed in 1838 and hangs in the chapel's museum. Bequest of Mrs Robert E. Lee III.





It was ordered in China by Samuel Shaw, one of the original members of the Society of the Cincinnati. He was also the supercargo on the *Empress of China*, the first American ship to sail from the newly independent United States to China in 1784. Shaw returned the following year with a 302-piece service, which was eventually divided between the Washington family and the family of Henry “Light-Horse Harry” Lee, who served with Washington during the Revolutionary War. A descendent of the Lee family gave the pieces in the Reeves Collection to the university.

This cup is from the earliest armorial coffee service known. It was made about 1710 for Harry Gough, a captain working for the Honourable East India Company. It is displayed with other armorial cups formerly in the collection of the late David Sanctuary Howard.

The collection has 25 pieces from a large dinner service with the monogram of Paul Revere. It is believed that these pieces were part of the “imported table Sett China” recorded in Revere’s 1818 household inventory. It is not surprising that several pieces depict the Great Seal of the United States, as this was one of Mrs Reeves’ particular interests, as were pieces reflecting America’s maritime history. One wall of a main gallery is devoted to an incredible collection of 600 armorial coffee cups from the collection of the late David Sanctuary Howard, the preeminent scholar of Chinese armorial porcelains. The uniformity of the cups creates a striking display...



Made in China between 1740 and 1745, this almost complete tea service is finely painted with scenes of European merchants packing and unpacking barrels. The scenes are copied from porcelain made at the Meissen factory in the 1730s. Meissen designs were often imitated by Chinese artisans in this period.

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